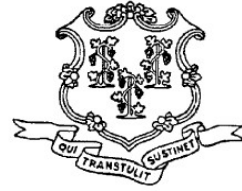


# News Release



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **DPH encourages safe swimming & boating this summer**

**HARTFORD** -- Memorial Day weekend marks the unofficial start of summer, a time when residents across Connecticut take advantage of long, sunny days by heading outdoors to swim and to boat. With that in mind, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) reminds you to take basic water safety precautions to protect yourself and your loved ones this summer.

"Swimming and other activities on or near the water are wonderful opportunities for family fun and exercise," said DPH Commissioner J. Robert Galvin, M.D., M. P. H. "But families need to be aware of the risks, and take basic steps to reduce them. For example, DPH highly recommends that families take advantage of swimming lessons, boating safety classes, Coast Guard-approved personal floatation devices and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training."

Drowning is most common during the summer months. Between 2001 and 2003, at least 87 Connecticut residents drowned. Children are especially at risk, with drowning as the second leading cause of injury-related death among children ages 1-14 both in Connecticut and the nation. Approximately 25% of all Connecticut drowning deaths were children less than 15 years of age.

Additionally, children under the age of five and males of all ages are most at risk of both fatal and non-fatal drowning. Non-fatal drowning injuries may result in brain damage or other long-term adverse affects. Young children are most likely to drown in residential pools while older children are more likely to drown in natural settings.

"Vigilance is the key to keeping people safe in or near water, whether they are swimming or boating. Adults in particular need to constantly and vigilantly watch over the children in their care when they are swimming or playing in or near water," Commissioner Galvin stated.

Whether you are with children or adults, DPH recommends these precautions while swimming:

- Supervise children with vigilance near water. Remember that children can drown in just a few inches of water in sources such as wading pools or buckets.
- Never swim alone.
- Swim only in designated swimming areas.
- Choose swimming sites that employ trained and certified lifeguards whenever possible.
- Avoid alcohol use before and during aquatic activities, or when supervising children in or near water.
- Teach children over 4 to swim, but remember that *constant supervision is still key*.

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If you have a swimming pool, these additional precautions are recommended:

- Install a fence or wall completely around the pool. Barriers should be at least 4 feet high and have no hand or footholds that could help a child climb over.
- Gates should be self-closing and self-latching with the latch out of a child's reach.
- Pool alarms may provide additional layers of protection.
- For above ground pools, steps and ladders should be secured and locked or removed when not in use.
- Keep a phone and rescue equipment poolside.

Boaters are asked to:

- Learn to swim. The best thing anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is to learn to swim. This includes anyone participating in any boating activity.
- Remember that alcohol and boating don't mix. Alcohol impairs your judgment, balance, and coordination. For the same reasons it is dangerous to operate an automobile while under the influence of alcohol, people should not operate a boat while drinking alcohol.
- Use Coast Guard-approved life jackets for yourself and your passengers when boating and fishing.
- Develop a float plan. Anytime you go out in a boat, give a responsible person details about where you will be and how long you will be gone. If the boat is delayed due to an emergency, becomes lost, or encounters other problems, you want help to be able to reach you.
- Find a boating course in your area - these courses teach about navigation rules, emergency procedures and the effects of wind, water conditions, and weather.
- Watch the weather: All boats should have on-board a NOAA-capable radio to monitor local weather conditions. Constantly check those conditions, and stop boating as soon as you see or hear about a storm.
- Keep boats out of designated swimming areas.

For more information about water safety and drowning prevention, visit the following websites:

United States Consumer Product Safety Commission: <http://www.cpsc.gov/>

United States Coast Guard Boating Safety: <http://www.uscgboating.org>

SAFE KIDS Worldwide: <http://www.usa.safekids.org/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/>

American Red Cross: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)